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Council didn't look at all of LEED facts before vote

Maggie Carnevale
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Regarding the article,

“City votes against grant for fire station,” (AC-T, Feb. 22): I am a resident of Asheville, a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design-accredited professional for one of the large architectural firms in town, a board member of the Western North Carolina Green Building Council and have dedicated the past three years of my professional career to the design of a 470,000-square-foot school in Western

North Carolina with the goal of achieving LEED silver-certification.

I am upset by the apparent lack of researched information being presented to City Council and to the public. Asheville would not be a pioneer in the effort to provide energy-efficient public buildings. This focus toward building green is a nationwide trend that is borne of increasing fuel costs and a public that is becoming increasingly aware of its negative effect on the planet.

According to the U.S.

Green Building Council's LEED Web site (www.usgbc.org), there

are currently five LEED-

certified fire stations in the United States — four in California and one in Washington State.

There are also 24 additional fire stations registered to

participate in the LEED

certification program. This shows the increasing trend for this building type to use green methods and technologies.

LEED-certified fire station case studies exist and

should be researched for

their successes and failures.

Depending on what green technologies are implemented in the building, the cost to implement LEED could vary significantly.

In fact, the level of

certification sought affects increased cost, according to a study in 2003 by Greg Kats of Capital E entitled, “The

Costs and Financial Benefits of Green Building.”

A platinum-certified

building, on average, can expect a 6.5 percent premium, whereas a certified building can expect a 0.66 percent premium.

There are, of course, case studies of buildings where LEED certification does not require any additional cost.

If Asheville City Council is truly committed to green building, they should not only be looking at initial construction costs, but the operational costs of the building as well.

A life-cycle cost analysis on the green equipment and building methods for this building will more than likely prove that these energy-saving upgrades will pay for themselves in a matter of a few years.

Factor in additional savings of operations, maintenance, and user productivity, and even larger savings will become evident.

There are no documented cases of building construction costs doubling due solely to the implementation of LEED certification.

The bottom line is that LEED certification can be cost-effective if it is implemented early in the design process and its extent is weighed against other cost factors.

To have certified green buildings dismissed by members of city council uninformed on the positive aspects of this program and its relative costs to implement it, is unfortunate to say the least.

Originally from Charleston, S.C., Maggie Carnevale has a masters in architecture from the University of Arizona. She lives in Asheville and works for Padgett & Freeman Architects.

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